



Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence

Testimony Regarding

HB 5030, AAC Making Adjustments to State Expenditures for FY15 Department of Social Services Budget

Member Organizations

**The Umbrella Center for
Domestic Violence Services**

Ansonia, CT

The Center for Family Justice

Bridgeport, CT

Women's Center

Danbury, CT

Domestic Violence Program

United Services

Dayville, CT

Network Against Domestic

Abuse

Enfield, CT

Domestic Abuse Services

Greenwich YWCA

Greenwich, CT

Interval House

Hartford, CT

Meriden-Wallingford Chrysalis

Meriden, CT

New Horizons

Middletown, CT

Prudence Crandall Center

New Britain, CT

The Umbrella Center for

Domestic Violence Services

New Haven, CT

Safe Futures

New London, CT

Domestic Violence Crisis Center

Norwalk, CT

Women's Support Services

Sharon, CT

Domestic Violence Crisis Center

Stamford, CT

Susan B. Anthony Project

Torrington, CT

Safe Haven

Waterbury, CT

Domestic Violence Program

United Services

Willimantic, CT

Appropriations Committee

February 14, 2014

Good afternoon Senator Bye, Representative Walker, Representative Abercrombie and members of the committee. CT Coalition Against Domestic Violence (CCADV) is the state's leading voice for victims of domestic violence and our 18 member organizations that serve them.

We thank Governor Malloy for maintaining funding through the Department of Social Services (DSS) for domestic violence shelters, particularly in this extended period of economic uncertainty. We would, however, **respectfully request that you consider (1) increased funding for domestic violence shelters and (2) funding to support a statewide Spanish hotline that will meet the needs of Connecticut's growing Hispanic and Latina populations.**

(1) Increased Shelter Funding

In fiscal year 2013 (7/1/12 - 6/30/13), CCADV's 18 member domestic violence organizations served more than 56,000 victims of domestic violence. This includes over 1,200 adults and 800 children who stayed in our shelters and safe homes because they were in serious physical danger and had no other safe options. In that same time period, **1,200 victims were DENIED SHELTER due to a lack of beds** and approximately **\$40,000 was spent to shelter victims in hotels, which is a temporary and unsafe solution.**

Victims face a number of obstacles when they choose to leave an abusive and controlling relationship, the ripple effects of which often include loss of employment, educational opportunities, childcare and housing. Victims are often faced with the impossible choice of remaining in the abusive or violent situation, becoming homeless or living in poverty. It is often at this point that they turn to domestic violence agencies for support and shelter.

Achieving sustainable safety, financial security, and emotional well-being for themselves and their children are always the goals. Unfortunately, these goals often seem impossible to attain in the minds of victims. However, the services provided by our member organizations make it extremely possible. Our shelter programs provide a safe, secure and supportive environment that includes safety planning, counseling, life skills training to help transition victims after their shelter stay, and access to other vital needs, such as court advocacy and employment referrals.

It is critical that we get victims into shelter, especially in high-danger situations. Here in Connecticut, **an average of 15 people are killed as a result of intimate partner homicide each year.** Through our Lethality Assessment Program, CCADV and several of our member organizations have partnered with law enforcement agencies across the state to use a nationally recognized screening tool to identify victims facing the greatest risk for the abuse turning lethal. Law enforcement immediately connects these victims to the local domestic violence program and available shelter beds are an essential factor in the victim's ability to leave.

Our shelters are staffed 24 hours per day, 7 days per week by individuals dedicated to

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empowering victims to overcome their abusive relationships. Many victims who reach out for a safe place and are denied due to a lack of funding or space end up either remaining in the abusive relationship or becoming homeless. By ensuring that victims have somewhere safe to go, we also ensure that the cycle of violence is interrupted. This helps us avoid other costly services, such as law enforcement responding to calls and the need for emergency medical care, which is often paid for with Medicaid.

(2) Statewide Spanish Hotline (\$150,000)

The 2010 census shows that Hispanics and Latinas make up 13.4% of Connecticut's population. In 2011, Hispanic/Latina victims made up 21% of CCADV's service population. Because the statewide domestic violence hotline automatically routes callers to their local domestic violence organization when they call, it is not always possible for all 18 domestic violence organizations in Connecticut to have bilingual staff answering the hotline 24 hours per day. Therefore, when a bilingual counselor is not available and a Spanish-speaking victim calls, that caller and counselor connect using Language Line.

Language Line is an interpretation service we utilize when there is not a certified domestic violence counselor available who speaks the language of the caller. The Language Line interpreter is not a counselor and instead is a 3rd party on the call translating between the victim and certified domestic violence counselor. Having to tell their story through a third person can be traumatic for victims and hinder the chance that the victim connects with the counselor and takes the next steps in receiving services.

In 2013 (Jan. – Dec.), CCADV spent nearly \$16,000 on interpretation for Spanish-speaking callers via Language Line. The cost associated with this covered nearly 1,500 calls from Spanish speaking victims resulting in just over 307 hours of interpretation. Spanish-speaking callers represent the majority of calls made to Language Line and, again, results in a victim having to tell their story through a 3rd person who is not a certified domestic violence counselor.

Funding for a statewide Spanish hotline would allow CCADV and our 18 member domestic violence organizations to ensure that a Spanish-speaking, certified domestic violence counselor would be available to speak with Spanish-speaking callers 24 hours per day, 7 days per week. This will provide the best possible service to meet the needs of these victims in a confidential and trauma-informed manner.

As with other nonprofit health and human services, our members continue to see the demand for their services rise. More and more victims come through our doors seeking safety and support at the same time that the cost for providing those services increases in conjunction with only a 1% Cost of Living Adjustment since FY08. We recognize the difficult decisions that you must make regarding the state budget and appreciate your consideration of our budget requests as you seek continued funding of essential nonprofit human services.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns.

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